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FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 6745/6746  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5154/5155  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 5198/5199  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 069219

SIPDIS, SENSITIVE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED CAPTION)

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [SOCI](#)  
SUBJECT: UN HABITAT: WORLD OF SLUMS GROWING

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a June 22 meeting with Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Phillip Carter, Dr. Anna Tibaijuka, the United Nations' Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Habitat, emphasized the need for countries to recognize the challenge of slum urbanization that is spreading throughout sub-Saharan Africa. According to Tibaijuka's studies, 72% of urban populations in sub-Saharan Africa live in slums. Terming urbanization as sub-Saharan Africa's "second greatest challenge" (after HIV/AIDS), Tibaijuka noted four critical areas for policy-makers and donors to address: 1) land administration/tenure; 2) financial innovations; 3) municipal and city planning; and 4) water and sanitation. Tibaijuka stressed that if unchecked and neglected, slum urbanization would have adverse implications on a given country's health and development potential - significantly diminishing any possibility of hope or positive growth for a country - in particular its youth. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The United Nations' Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN Habitat (Nairobi), Dr. Anna Tibaijuka, met on June 22 with Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Phillip Carter to brief him about UN Habitat's concerns and outlook regarding slum urbanization throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Also attending for UN Habitat was its Washington, DC-based representative, Mr. Chris Williams. Foreign Affairs Officer Charles Chang attended on behalf of IO.

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Slum Urbanization: Not Just in the Big Cities  
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¶3. (SBU) Tibaijuka opened the discussion by offering an assessment of increasing slum urbanization throughout sub-Saharan Africa. According to UN Habitat's studies, 72% of sub-Saharan Africa's urban populations live in slums. Terming urban growth in sub-Saharan Africa as "chaotic," Tibaijuka noted that slums were increasing not just in large urban areas, but also in what she called "secondary" cities throughout Africa. Searching for better economic opportunities, large influxes of villagers are overwhelming secondary cities - which are less-equipped than capital cities to handle increased demographics. Tibaijuka offered that these secondary and "rural" slums are growing at a rate of 10% per year.

¶4. (SBU) Tibaijuka noted that that food insecurity and elevated fuel prices compound and exacerbate slums' already harsh living conditions. Sub-Saharan Africa ought to be, and once was a net food-exporter, she maintained. Today it is a net food-importer. Moreover, increased fuel prices have made

energy availability both expensive and scant. Bearing further pressure on sub-Saharan countries are inadequate infrastructure and a large and under-educated youth population.

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Building the Policy Construct  
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15. (SBU) Williams offered four points on which to build potential urbanization policy constructs: 1) land administration/tenure; 2) financial innovations; 3) municipal and city planning; and 4) water and sanitation. Citing inadequate and out-dated property laws, insufficient credit and financial instruments, deficient municipal planning, and practically non-existent water and sewage services, he contended that governments, policy-makers, and the donor community must incorporate all of these points to create a dialogue about developing solutions for - as well as curbing - slum urbanization.

16. (SBU) Expounding on these points, Williams opined that the urbanization dialogue is critical for all governments' long-term interests - notably from human and national security perspectives. He argued that slums have the potential to become terrorist breeding grounds and havens to radicalize destitute youth.

17. (SBU) Tibaijuka added that both the International

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Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank needed to "get on board" with regard to formally recognizing the urbanization problem. In her view, these two, credible, multilateral organizations' endorsements are crucial to furthering recognition of this challenge. She offered that by 2030, sub-Saharan Africa would cease to be a rural continent.

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Championing the Urbanization Issue  
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18. (SBU) Though not mentioning any high-profile or high-level individuals by name, Tibaijuka noted that need for someone to champion urbanization in the same way Darfur and HIV/AIDS have been. Doing so would help to distill the issue and rally broad exposure and support for it.

19. (SBU) Pursuant to Tibaijuka's comments, Williams next noted two events which will serve to bring urbanization to the fore. World Habitat Day will take place on October 5, 2009 in Washington, DC. According to Williams, there is already significant high-level USG support - notably from White House Senior Advisor Valerie Jarrett's office (Derek Douglas is the point of contact there) and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan. UN Habitat had approached U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Susan Rice, but according to Williams she had referred them to Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs, Dr. Esther Brimmer. Williams also highlighted the World Urban Forum (WUF) which will take place March 22-26, 2010 in Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian President Lula da Silva had already endorsed the WUF and agreed to attend.

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The Urbanization Policy Outlook  
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110. (SBU) Noting the need to place urbanization at the center of AF's policy construct, P/DAS Carter termed UN Habitat's urbanization data as "critical" to AF's policy outlook. P/DAS Carter noted the need to design policy with the urbanization challenge at the fore. He also noted the need for specialists trained in dealing with urbanization-specific challenges. He did not view

urbanization's challenges as new, but better defined under the "urbanization" rubric.

COMMENT

¶11. (SBU) Both Tibaijuka and Williams repeatedly noted the need for high-level support for recognizing and addressing slum urbanization. The fact that the United Nations has already recognized this problem is an important first step, but not enough in their view, to properly address the issue. USG support at the highest levels will be the sine qua non to winning broad, international, and diplomatic support to respond to and address this issue. Already having gained the attention of one White House senior advisor, a cabinet-level secretary, and an assistant secretary, UN Habitat will continue to press this issue. AF must be duly prepared. END COMMENT.  
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